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National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*

Sudan

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Introduction

1. This, the second report of the Sudan, underscores the country's respect for and commitment to the outcomes of the universal periodic review process as established under General Assembly resolution 60/251 and Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1, 16/21 and 17/19. The report covers the efforts made by the Sudan to follow up on the outcomes of that review, the plans put in place to ensure that human rights continue to be protected and promoted, and the tangible achievements made in that regard. In particular, it focuses on developments in the protection and promotion of human rights since the first report was submitted, on the implementation of the recommendations which the Sudan accepted and on the obstacles the country faces and which stand in the way of further improvements.

I. Methodology for follow-up to the universal periodic review and report preparation process

A. Methodology for follow-up to the universal periodic review

2. Since the presentation of the previous report, the Sudan has been working to implement the outcomes of the review. Under Decree No. 3 of 21 December 2011, the Minister of Justice, who is also director of the Advisory Council for Human Rights, created a committee made up of the bodies which had drafted that report, along with other bodies, under the chairmanship of the rapporteur of the Advisory Council for Human Rights. The committee drew up an action plan for the fulfilment of the country's obligations under the universal periodic review, which was made public via the media. The recommendations were listed and sent to the relevant authorities for implementation. The committee also organized 15 workshops in 15 of the country's provinces with representatives from civil society organizations and other bodies concerned with human rights, as a way of reinforcing the principle of national consultation and participation. In 2013 the Sudan submitted its voluntary mid-term report to the Human Rights Council universal periodic review mechanism setting forth the implementation status of the recommendations.

B. Report preparation and consultation process

3. In preparing the present report the Sudan has adhered to a methodology of consultation and participation, as per the relevant United Nations guidelines. The State adopted an action plan which included:

(a) The formation of a higher national committee to oversee the preparation of the first draft of the report and to review the final version;

(b) The formation of a technical committee to prepare the first draft of the report;

(c) The formation of a committee of experts to draw up the report.

4. The consultation process began in December 2011 with meetings and workshops to explain the universal periodic review. After that the specialized committees began meeting to carry out their tasks while the Advisory Council for Human Rights collected the necessary information. Two workshops were subsequently organized to review the draft of the report. The first of these involved civil society organizations and 70 such organizations were directly invited to participate while the event was also announced over the media. Twenty-four NGOs working in the field on human rights also took part. The second workshop was held with the National High Commissioner for Human Rights and

government departments. During the meetings all sides took an active part in developing the contents of the report.[1]

II. Developments in the promotion and protection of human rights

A. Legislative developments

5. Since the first report was endorsed, the Sudan has issued a series of laws to promote fundamental freedoms and protect human rights. The most important of these are:

The Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2014

6. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act was passed in 2014. It is consistent with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. The new law criminalizes all forms of human trafficking, provides legal protection for victims and ensures respect for their rights.

The Freedom of Information Act of 2015

7. The enactment of this piece of legislation is a reflection of the State's concern to ensure freedom in the access to and handling of information which, under this law, is protected as a basic right. This reflects General Assembly resolution 59 (1) which describes freedom of information as a fundamental human right, Human Rights Council resolution 7/37 and others.

The Act establishing the Educational Professions Council of 2014

8. The issuing of the Act establishing the Educational Professions Council is a way to promote the right to education and to develop and promote the teaching professions, in light of the fact that education is a fundamental right.

The Asylum Act of 2014

9. This new, comprehensive and flexible law, which abrogates the Asylum Act of 1974, draws from the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its attendant Protocol signed in New York in 1967, and the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa adopted by the African Union in 1969.

The Mineral Wealth and Mining Development Act of 2015

10. The Act, which regulates mining operations and contains provision for the formation of the Higher Mining Council, reflects the fact that mineral wealth is considered to be a national resource. Under the new law, persons who work in the mining sector are required to abide by the environmental conditions laid down by the Ministry of Minerals, because living in a clean and natural environment is a human right. The Act also sets forth the social obligations of companies operating in the mining sector.

[1] Annex 1 gives details about the report preparation process and the consultations and contacts, as well as a list of names of those consulted.

The Criminal Code

11. The Code was amended in 2015 with the addition of the offence of sexual harassment and the separation of the offence of rape from that of adultery in article 149, thereby removing all ambiguity and ensuring just and fair treatment for victims. Two paragraphs were added to article 88: paragraph (a) which makes it a crime for public officials to abuse their office or authority, and paragraph (b) which defines a public official as anyone who works in a legislative, executive, administrative or judicial capacity, whether appointed or elected.

The Elections Act

12. This Act was amended in 2014 to increase the proportion of women from 25 per cent to 30 per cent and to improve geographical and proportional representation in order to widen participation.

The Transparency, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Act of 2016

13. This Act, which was endorsed by the National Assembly (parliament) in January 2016, is consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It contains provision for the formation of an independent anti-corruption commission with specific powers and prerogatives, it also defines what constitutes corruption, the measures that should be taken to combat it and the judicial sanctions offenders face.

The Health Insurance Act of 2016

14. This Act replaces the National Health Insurance Fund Act of 2001. It extends health insurance coverage and underscores the State's resolve to assist the weaker strata of society, especially persons with disabilities who, under the Act, are to be provided with assistive and curative devices.

B. Institutional developments (the formation of mechanisms), these include the following

The National Human Rights Commission

15. The 15 members of the National Human Rights Commission were appointed during the period covered by the report. Their appointment complied with article 142 of the Constitution whereby the members have to be independent, competent, non-partisan, impartial, and as broadly representative as possible.

The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking

16. The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking was created on 30 April 2014 pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 187 of 2014 and in accordance with the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2014. The aim was to form a body responsible for coordinating efforts to combat human trafficking and to provide assistance to victims at the national level, as well as for coordinating with relevant regional and international bodies.

17. There were 213 criminal cases of human trafficking in the eastern provinces of the Sudan and 26 in Khartoum province in the years 2014-2015. A number of cases have been handled in coordination with other bodies such as the Commission for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, thanks to which 614 victims of human trafficking of various nationalities have received assistance.

18. A regional ministerial conference on the trafficking and smuggling of persons in the Horn of Africa was held in Khartoum from 13-16 October 2014, the intention being to address this phenomenon in its international and regional dimensions. One of the outcomes of the conference was the publication of the Khartoum Declaration which was adopted at a meeting in Rome at the end of 2014.

C. Strategy and policy developments

The National Quarter-Century Strategy

19. The National Quarter-Century Strategy for 2007-2031 was adopted using an approach commonly followed in strategic planning. Institutions were created to draw up, implement and follow up on strategic plans and to involve leading figures in society as well as State and non-State institutions, in order to create a consensual overarching vision which could be applied to the National Quarter-Century Strategy. The Strategy aims to create the conditions for a free, dignified life, and comprehensive justice by promoting social peace and pacific coexistence in order protect the land, people and resources of the Sudan.

The National Plan to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Sudan (2013-2023)

20. The aim of the Plan is to develop human rights and provide them with a firm legislative foundation, to apply the principles of equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of rights and to raise awareness about human rights. It also contemplates introducing legal reforms, harmonizing national legislation with the regional and international obligations of the Sudan, building partnerships with civil society organizations, strengthening cooperation and coordination with law enforcement bodies and formulating a plan for follow-up and implementation.

III. The effective promotion and protection of human rights

A. The right to health

21. The State has developed a five-year strategic plan 2012-2016 setting forth health priorities, foremost among them comprehensive health care coverage. The strategic plan includes annual plans which are in the course of being implemented. An anti-malaria plan — malaria being one of the principle causes of death in the Sudan — has been extended to cover 4,912 public health institutions which offer free treatment for malaria. That represents 85 per cent of all public health institutions in the country. At the same time, 1,131 local communities have malaria home treatment services run by volunteers. Rapid malaria tests are available at 2,933 public health institutions covering 90.9 per cent of the targeted population while 92 per cent of the targeted population — including dwellers in rural areas surrounding cities, displaced persons, refugees and nomadic persons — have been provided with impregnated mosquito nets, a total of 11 million long-lasting insecticidal nets having been distributed between 2012 and 2015. The number of persons infected with malaria dropped by 72 per cent in 2014 while deaths from the disease in the same period dropped by 62 per cent.[2]

22. With encouragement from the State and the cooperation of partners, associations of persons living with HIV/AIDS have been set up and registered, while HIV/AIDS services

[2] Details about the number of cases of malaria and deaths from the disease, as registered in State health institutions between the years 2000 and 2014, are to be found in tables 1 and 2 of annex 2.

have been incorporated into health care services at all levels. Furthermore, a bill has been drafted guaranteeing full constitutional rights for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

23. In the area of social benefits, the State helps citizens to meet the costs of treatment via a number of programmes including free care in hospital emergency departments during crisis situations as well as free treatment for diseases which lead to the impoverishment of families. Free treatment is also made available thanks to programmes which receive support from abroad.[3]

24. In 2014-2015, in order to expand basic health-care services, 337 units and centres catering for family health were built, equipped and staffed with qualified personnel in various provinces of the Sudan. Moreover, in November 2015, contracts were signed to fit out 97 hospitals in rural areas with operating theatres, delivery rooms, blood banks and laboratories, the full costs being met by the Government. The hospitals, fitted with all the necessary equipment, will be handed over by the end of the first half of 2016. According to reports of the World Health Organization, the Sudan is one of the best countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa region as regards the vaccination of children.

25. The health insurance system covers a broad swathe of persons who work in the public and private sector, as well as retirees. The aim of the system is to meet the costs of health care and treatment of those persons and such members of their families as are also covered by the health insurance.[4]

B. The right to food

26. The State has plans and programmes in place to help Sudanese citizens access adequate food. A three-year programme 2011-2014 has been adopted as well as an agricultural revival programme focusing on food and cash crops. Thanks to these measures the production of the crops involved has doubled.[5]

27. A national food security and nutrition charter was issued in 2013 as was the second stage national strategy for 2012-2016.[6]

C. The right to clean water and sanitation

28. A strategic plan has been drawn up, and is currently being implemented, to improve water and sanitation services at the national and provincial level over the period 2012-2016. The aim of the plan is to ensure that Sudanese citizens can access safe and clean water, and adequate sanitation. The State is making particular efforts in cities suffering water shortages and a number of projects have been launched including the building of dams, filtration plants and wells. By the start of 2015, 70 per cent of the population had access to drinking water (80 per cent in rural areas and 60 per cent in cities). During the period 2010-2014, as part of its water-harvesting programme, the Government implemented 345 distribution projects throughout the provinces — including 291 dams and boreholes thanks to which

[3] Details about social benefits for the period 2012-2014 are contained in the table in annex 3.

[4] Details about health insurance beneficiaries in the period 2011-2014 are contained in the table in annex 4.

[5] The table in annex 5 gives a breakdown of the production of target crops in the three-year programme, comparing the situation in 2012 with the initial situation in 2011.

[6] See annex 6 which contains a table giving details about food grains for the period 2013-2014, and annex 7 showing industrial production for the period 2012-2014.

86.3 million cubic metres of rainwater have been harvested — as well as 54 other water service projects.[7]

D. The right to housing

29. In the period 2005-2014 the National Fund for Housing and Construction, via its branch offices in various provinces of the Sudan, built 97,000 housing units. Six provinces have been selected to continue with the first stage and a sum of 611 million Sudanese pounds has been allocated for the construction of 7,178 housing units, 83 per cent of which have been completed.

30. In order to address the problem of unregulated housing, two cities have been established north and south of Khartoum made up of 500,000 units with full services including water, health care, schools, roads and police stations. They are intended to accommodate persons who had been evicted following a social survey carried out with full regard for humanitarian aspects. By the year 2014 more than 72,000 dwellings had been completed.[8]

E. The right to development

31. In accordance with the National Quarter-Century Strategy for 2007-2031, and despite the enormous challenges the Sudan is facing, a number of advanced development projects were put into place during the period 2013-2014 in various different fields. Power generation projects were implemented in big cities while also taking account of the rural electricity supply,[9] and this has contributed to the development of the industrial, agricultural, trade and housing sectors. The long-term plan for the electricity sector 2012-2030 is going a long way to resolving the power supply problem by setting up generating plants, power lines and distribution equipment. The intention is that by the end of the plan, everyone should have access to the electricity distribution network.[10]

32. The State continues to build housing and to offer vital services in areas affected by the construction or heightening of dams.[11] It also requires companies active in the mining and petroleum sectors to exercise social responsibility towards local communities.[12]

F. The right to work

33. The findings of a workforce survey to determine levels of employment and participation in economic life among men and women made public in April 2012. Among its more significant results, the survey showed that economic participation among both

[7] The table in annex 8 includes details about dam and water-harvesting projects and the five-year sanitation plan, which are currently being implemented. Annex 9 includes a table on the water supply to the provinces for the years 2011 to 2013. Annex 10 contains a table explaining the production and demand for water up to 2013.

[8] See annex 11.

[9] Annex 12 includes a table outlining power distribution projects, while annex 13 gives details about electricity production in the years 2013-2014.

[10] Annex 14 includes two tables explaining developments in energy production, manufacturing capacity, power lines and numbers of energy suppliers.

[11] Annex 15 gives an outline of the services offered in the resettlement resulting from the project to increase the height of the Roseires Dam and the project affecting the people of Atbara and Setit.

[12] Annex 16 explains the social responsibilities of extractive industries.

sexes increased from 39.3 per cent in 1999 to 43 per cent in 2011. The number of people reliant on paid work jumped to 40.1 per cent, standing at 43.6 per cent for men and 29.4 per cent for women.

34. In 2011 the State launched a nationwide project to incorporate graduates from universities and institutes of higher education into government institutions. This project reflects the State's policy to build capacity at the provincial level and to provide sufficient staff to that end, thereby responding to demands to devolve authority and supply additional resources to the provinces. Eleven thousand eight hundred and ninety graduates found employment in the State sector in 2012, 23,541 in 2013 and 14,448 in 2014.[13]

35. A project to involve young people in labour-intensive employment was launched at the beginning of 2013 with support from the IBSA Group (India, Brazil and South Africa) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project targets 2,000 young people, both skilled and unskilled, and trains them in the professions of waste recycling and road maintenance. It is currently being implemented in the province of Khartoum but will be extended to the provinces of Western and Southern Kordofan and Darfur.

G. The right to education

36. There has been a noticeable improvement in the exercise of this right on the ground as the State has been making great efforts to improve attendance levels in general education by building new classrooms and schools, and meeting other requirements. These provisions are in keeping with the five-year plan 2012-2016, the decisions taken at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals. In 2013, a global partnership agreement to promote basic education was signed between the Government of the Sudan and the donor support fund, the aim being to increase access to school education for all children[14] with a particular focus on children in rural schools, girls and other marginalized groups such as displaced and nomadic persons. Other aims include reducing school dropout rates, increasing attendance opportunities and ensuring that pupils remain at school during their basic education.[15] The project to strengthen basic education, which began in 2013, includes the construction of 2,000 classrooms, of which 608 had been built by 2014, and the distribution of education grants to 800 pupils, of which 463 have so far been disbursed. The project is due to come to an end in 2017. Child-friendly school standards have been applied in 300 schools to ensure that children receive their education in a safe environment.

37. Education strategies for girls (2014-2016), nomadic persons and children with disabilities (2013-2016) have all been updated.

38. The eastern provinces (Gedaref, Kassala and Red Sea), where school attendance is lower, have undertaken to follow a policy of food for education whereby pupils are provided with a meal and their families receive material support. As a result enrolment has increased by up to 80 per cent in some areas.

[13] The table in annex 17 shows the number of graduates incorporated into government service in the years 2011-2014.

[14] The table in annex 18 shows the number of pupils enrolled in the first level of basic education and in secondary education, as well pupils with disabilities in basic and secondary education, for the period 2011-2014.

[15] The table in annex 19 gives details about schools for nomadic persons and the number of pupils attending them in the period 2011-2014.

39. Under Ministerial Decree No. 9 of 26 May 2014, a higher national committee has been formed to implement the national plan for human rights education. The committee has the following tasks:

- Following up on the national plan for human rights education;
- Implementing national commitments in the field of human rights education;
- Authorizing and funding projects under the plan;
- Implementing national awareness-raising programmes among educators;

40. The State is working to create an advanced electronic learning environment.

H. The right to culture

41. Presidential Decree No. 53 of 2013 sought to promote this right by separating the Ministry of Culture from the Ministry of Information.

42. In 2013, the Ministry of Culture launched the "Cultural Mapping" project the aim of which is to identify, preserve and administer cultural heritage in order to promote sustainable economic and social development and to stimulate national diversity in all sectors of society. The relevance of the project lies in the immensity of the Sudan's cultural legacy and the pluralism and diversity which characterize cultural expression in the country, including languages, customs, beliefs, visual arts, literature, etc. The project is being implemented in coordination with the office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Khartoum.[16]

43. Projects have been adopted at the national level focusing on the provincial capitals, the aim being to stimulate cultural activities vertically between capitals and horizontally among the provinces themselves:

- The Kadugli Project (Southern Kordofan) made that city heritage capital for 2015. Before that, the city of Geneina in Western Darfur was Sudanese cultural capital in 2012;
- The Sennar Project made that city Islamic cultural capital for 2017;
- Arrangements for the candidacy of the city of Port Sudan as Sudanese Arab cultural capital have begun in accordance with decisions taken by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization.

44. A survey on folklore was carried out in the period 2012-2015, in the provinces of Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, Western Darfur and Sennar.

I. The rights of women

45. The State takes steps to protect and safeguard women, and grants them rights equal to those of men in many areas of life, without discrimination, particularly as regards civil, political and cultural freedoms and rights, the right to education, health care, property and freedom of expression, and the right to form public interest groups. These rights are put into effect on the ground by various State institutions (see paras. 63 to 66).

[16] See annex 20 for information about the number of theatres, youth centres, registered sporting clubs, premier league clubs, stadiums, sports fields and swimming pools during the period 2011-2014.

J. The rights of children

46. One of the most important advances in the promotion of children's rights was the creation in 2014 of an information management system for monitoring and follow-up on the implementation of strategic polices aimed at children, thanks to a partnership between the Advisory Council for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with the cooperation of the National Centre for Information and the Central Statistical Office.

47. Statistics for the year 2013 show that 44,821 children between the ages of 6 and 13 who had dropped out of school re-enrolled in basic education, thanks to the accelerated education programme.

48. The number of primary health care facilities offering integrated management of childhood illnesses rose from 2,198 to 2,556 in 2013. Those facilities are operational in 113 of the 184 targeted districts.

49. The National Council for Child Welfare has adopted a new methodology for the implementation of the five-year child welfare plan 2012-2016. Beginning in 2014, it has instituted annual plans under which all child welfare activities are integrated into cooperation agreements with donors which serve the goals of the five-year plan. During 2013, more than 7,182 children who had contact with the law — whether as victims, witnesses or offenders — were able to benefit from the services provided by the police family and child protection units, which comply with child protection standards.

50. During the course of 2013, child protection working groups were set up under the leadership of child welfare councils in the provinces and with members drawn from organizations active in the field of child protection. They are working to address the problems children face in three regions affected by armed conflict.[17]

K. International and regional cooperation

51. The Sudan is committed to cooperating with international human rights mechanisms and special procedures with thematic and country mandates. During the reporting period, the country received three independent experts on the human rights situation in the Sudan: the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. The country is also committed to cooperating with regional mechanisms, and delegations from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and from the Arab Human Rights Committee visited the Sudan and received all the cooperation and assistance they needed from the Sudanese Government.

IV. State of implementation of recommendations

52. The Sudan fully accepted 121 and partially accepted 12 recommendations. The state of implementation of those recommendations is as follows:

[17] The table in annex 21 gives indicators relating to the principal cases concerning children.

A. Accession to international instruments

Recommendations 83.1, 83.5, 83.6, 83.7, 83.8, 83.9, 83.10, 83.11, 83.12, 83.13 and 83.14

53. In 2013, in order to promote and strengthen the legislative framework underpinning human rights, the State ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, while in September 2014 it ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Moreover, by decree of the Minister of Justice, committees have been formed to study the possibility of acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. A committee has also been created to examine the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

B. Ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Recommendation 83.2

54. The Sudan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1986 and duly presents reports and holds discussions with international and regional committees in that regard. In fact, it submitted its fourth periodic report under article 40 of the Covenant before the Human Rights Committee in Geneva on 3 and 4 July 2014.

C. Constitutional and legal framework

Recommendations 83.18, 83.19, 83.28, 83.29, 83.30 and 83.33

55. As of 2011, work began on drafting a permanent Constitution. The process has involved all stakeholders, including the executive, the legislature, political forces, civil society organizations, academic institutions, representatives of women and young people as well as local authorities and other grass-roots components of society. One of the recommendations to emerge from the consultations and workshops was, at the very least, to maintain the existing Bill of Rights contained in the current Interim National Constitution. This comprehensive national dialogue, which excluded no one, was harmonized on 10 October 2015 when a road map was drawn up setting forth six strands for future dialogue — including basic rights and freedoms, governance and implementation mechanisms — which it was hoped would lead to a permanent Constitution for the country. On 24 December 2015, the National Dialogue Governance Committee unanimously agreed to the draft of a new Constitution which enshrines the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law, the separation of powers and good governance.

56. The State remains committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and since the 2011 referendum, which led to self-determination for South Sudan, the authorities have been careful to abide by its terms. Despite remaining challenges, which revolve around the referendum in the Abyei region and are due to a disagreement on the interpretation of the law, both parties (the Government of the Sudan and the Government of South Sudan) are seeking to resolve their differences through amicable negotiations. Negotiations regarding Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile are continuing under the auspices of high-level mechanisms of the African Union.

57. In November 2015 the Minister of Justice issued a number of decrees for the formation of committees to review 63 pieces of legislation which were to be amended as

part of a programme of State reform pursuant to Decree No. 140 of 2015 issued by the Council of Ministers. The laws to be reviewed by those committees include the 1991 Criminal Code, the 1983 Code of Civil Procedure, the 2009 Press and Publications Act and the 2010 National Security Act.

D. Recommendations concerning the rights of children

Recommendations 83.33, 83.46, 83.63, 83.64, 83.65, 83.66, 83.67, 83.68, 83.94, 83.95, 83.96, 83.97, 83.98, 83.99, 83.100, 83.101, 83.111, 83.112 , 83.113, 83.114, 83.115, 83.148, 83.149, 83.150, 83.152 and 83.153

58. In the area of policy and strategy the following measures have been taken: a charter of children's rights has been drafted for inclusion in the forthcoming Constitution and national strategies have been developed aimed at preventing child marriage, helping children in early childhood and protecting the children of female prisoners.

59. Implementing regulations for the Child Act were issued in 2013. They cover a number of important questions such as kindergartens, the treatment of child victims, the regulation of child labour, referral outside the judicial system, breastfeeding, etc. A social monitoring system has been set up in a number of courts to oversee the application of penalties other than detention, while the system of referral outside the judicial system has begun to be applied in four provinces.

60. The Public Prosecutor has established 18 offices to oversee investigations carried out by the police unit for the protection of families and children. Also, 18 children's courts have been set up to examine cases involving child victims of crime. The staff of these judicial institutions has received training in the principles and procedures followed in juvenile courts and the treatment of offenders. Moreover, mechanisms are available to provide psychological and social support to children, whether offenders, victims or witnesses.

61. The Ministry of the Interior has set up 39 police units for the protection of families and children at the provincial and district level. They are responsible for conducting investigations into offences committed against children and for implementing measures to ensure that children are protected against violations of any kind.

62. The Civil Registration Act was issued in 2011. The Act makes the registration of births obligatory and sets forth the provisions necessary for the fulfilment of that obligation. The use of civil registration procedures has been generalized throughout the provinces of the Sudan and a national strategy has been formulated to develop those procedures and to collect vital statistics.

63. A section for the protection of children in situations of emergency and conflict was set up in 2014. The Sudan has focused on nine international standards in its response to children in situations of emergency and armed conflict. One of those standards concerns children associated with armed groups.

64. Article 4 of the Children's Act of 2010 sets the age of criminal responsibility for children at 12 years. The Act also defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 and, in article 69, sets forth the punitive measures which may be applied to child offenders, which do not include imprisonment, corporal punishment, death or any other penalty. The Constitutional Court has developed a general constitutional principle whereby the Children's Act 2010 is given the status of a special law which prevails over all general laws. In that context we may mention Constitutional Court ruling No. 51/2013 and Supreme Court rulings No. 199/2014, 173/2014 and 203/2014.

65. Thanks to a partnership between the National Council for Child Welfare and UNICEF, on 3 December 2015 agreement was reached on the final draft of a plan of action between the Republic of the Sudan and the United Nations to protect children in areas affected by armed conflict. This important step aims to move towards the removal of the name of the Sudan from the list of States which recruit child soldiers and involve them in armed conflict issued by the United Nations Secretary-General on 11 June 2012. The plan of action has now been submitted for signature.

66. Article 43 of the Children's Act prohibits the recruitment and employment of children in the armed forces or in armed groups, or their involvement in hostilities.

67. All laws relating to the military, such as the Armed Forces Act of 2007, the Police Act of 2008 and the National Service Act of 2013 state that recruits must not be less than 18 years of age.

68. Article 36 of the Children's Act 2010 prohibits the employment of children under 14 while the work of children over that age is governed by chapter VIII of the same Act. Similar provisions are also contained in the Labour Code of 1997 under which children may not be employed at night or in hazardous work. Regulations have been drafted which, in accordance with the list produced by the International Labour Organization, identify jobs which are prohibited for children.

E. Recommendations concerning the rights of women

Recommendations 83.77, 83.78, 83.79, 83.80, 83.81, 83.82, 83.83 and 83.84

69. The National Quarter-Century Strategy for 2007-2031 advocates the participation of women in a wholesale revival of society. One of the central elements of the Strategy is, in fact, the empowerment of women.

70. The State's concern in this regard has led it to create various frameworks as well as seven official national mechanisms to empower women and promote their role in society.

71. The national policy for the empowerment of women — which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2007 and has been used as a reference for the Constitution, national laws and regional and international treaties — has been updated for the period 2015-2016, with the help of development partners. Projects included in the policy aim to address issues such as education, health care, the environment, economic empowerment, human rights law, political participation and decision-making, and peace and conflict resolution. A detailed outline of a national policy to empower women has been proposed, incorporated into the second five-year plan (2012-2016) and sent out to districts and provinces.

72. The participation of women in the national legislature in 2015 was as follows. There were 131 female members of the National Assembly which has a total number of seats of 450, and there were 16 female members, out of a total of 56, of the Council of States.

F. Political measures

Recommendations 83.47, 83.48, 83.49, 83.50, 83.52, 83.53, 83.54, 83.55, 83.56, 83.57, 83.58, 83.59, 83.60, 83.61, 83.62, 83.63, 83.64, 83.65, 83.66, 83.67, 83.68 and 83.69

73. Following the 2014 amendments to electoral law, the people of Sudan helped to reinforce the foundations of democracy by participating in the April 2015 elections and the peaceful transfer of power. The proportion of women in parliament went up from 25 to 30 per cent and more than 40 political parties participated, representing all sectors of society.

74. The promotion of democracy and good governance is one of the most important topics to be addressed by the comprehensive national dialogue.

75. The approval in May 2013 of the National Plan to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Sudan (2013-2023) means that human rights principles and goals are taken into consideration in all policies and action plans. The National Plan, which has begun to be implemented in accordance with the indicators, timetables and major themes set forth in the plan itself, includes eight themes:

(a) Promoting the principle of human rights education;

(b) Civil and political rights;

(c) Economic, social and cultural rights;

(d) Reviewing national legislation;

(e) Raising awareness and disseminating knowledge about human rights and international humanitarian law;

(f) Strengthening ties with international and regional committees and bodies;

(g) Building partnerships with civil society organizations;

(h) Strengthening cooperation and coordination with law enforcement agencies.

76. One of the aims of the legislative review being undertaken as part of the reform programme instituted by the State pursuant to Decree No. 140 of 2015 of the Council of Ministers is to bring legislation into line with human rights principles and international humanitarian law.

77. The plan of the Advisory Council for Human Rights for the years 2014 and 2015 includes a number of training programmes and activities to promote and disseminate human rights awareness. The first stage of the plan focused on human rights education while the Minister of Justice, who is also director of the Advisory Council, issued a decree appointing a human rights consultant to the Minister of Education.

78. On the subject of recommendation 83.52 concerning the rights of South Sudanese, citizens of that neighbour country who are resident in the Republic of the Sudan enjoy all their human rights. Pursuant to the directives of the President of the Republic, they are treated on a par with Sudanese citizens and they face no difficulties nor suffer any detriment on account of their nationality. Under the Sudanese Nationality Act of 2009, amended in 2011, they are granted a transitional period in which to settle their affairs pursuant to the legal system of their own independent State and of agreements concluded between the two parties.

G. The rights of persons with disabilities

Recommendations 83.85 and 83.88

79. The Sudan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and has formed a national council and provincial councils to oversee the welfare of that category of persons. The State has also taken steps to improve education opportunities for persons with disabilities, such as allowing them to be admitted to State schools on the basis of half grades. A number of sign language programmes have been introduced and a children's section has been created in the National Centre for Child Culture. Moreover, the authorities seek to develop such children's creativity and work to ensure that the Sudan is represented on relevant international and regional forums.

80. The State has taken a number of steps to address the effects of poverty, providing poor persons with income-generating projects and integrating them into the health insurance system. Under the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2009, a certain proportion of land in the public housing scheme is assigned to persons with disabilities.

81. The National Election Commission has issued various directives to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to participate in political life. Approval was recently given for a strategic action plan promoting appropriate employment and economic empowerment for persons with disabilities in the period 2015-2020.

H. The participation of civil society organizations in the implementation of recommendations emerging from the universal periodic review

Recommendation 83.76

82. Civil society organizations are represented on the Advisory Council for Human Rights which coordinated the drafting of this report. They also participated in 15 provincial workshops on the implementation of recommendations emerging from the universal periodic review and were involved in a further workshop organized to implement recommendations concerning legal reform and the administration of justice. In the fields of education, awareness-raising and training in human rights, 45 workshops were held in 2014 thanks to coordination between the Ministry of Justice, civil society organizations and the National Human Rights Commission, in addition to 53 other activities to improve the effectiveness of child protection workers in the provinces of the Sudan.

I. The infrastructure of human rights institutions

Recommendations 83.34, 83.36, 83.37, 83.40 and 83.53

83. The Government of the Sudan is always willing to cooperate with the international community and strives to fulfil its commitment to support political transition in the post-referendum phase. For its part, the international community has an obligation to uphold the pledges it made in that regard, although its response in that regard has been weak.

84. UNDP has helped the Sudan in its efforts to disseminate awareness and to foster the principle of participation and consultation in the drafting of the new Constitution, and public forums on the subject have been held in 15 provinces of the Sudan. Also in cooperation with UNDP, a number of provincial workshops were organized on various major themes such as the implementation in the provinces of recommendations emerging from the universal periodic review, the administration of justice and legal reform including the Children's Act and the Elections Act.

J. The National Human Rights Commission

Recommendations 83.39, 83.41, 83.42, 83.43, 83.44 and 83.45

85. The National Human Rights Commission was established under a law passed in 2009, pursuant to article 142 of the Constitution. See paragraph 15 above.

86. The Commission launched its first strategic plan for the period 2014-2018. It has its own methodology to achieve its aims which focus on seven areas: studying and evaluating the capacity of the Commission through self-evaluation; conducting interviews; holding dialogue; exploring the capacities of its own members; developing plans and programmes

for its specialized committees; analysing legislation and reviewing the organizational and functional structure of the Commission itself.

87. The Commission has been granted observer status on the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights. It is a member of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and of the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions and has filed a request to become an associate member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

K. Efforts to halt climate change

Recommendation 83.69

88. Sudan ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol in 2014.

89. Environmental protection regulations were amended in the year 2011 with the addition of provisions under which polluting industries are required to ensure that the environment in which they operate is fully conserved. According to the Environmental Protection Act and its associated regulations, anyone responsible for damaging the environment is required to repair the damage caused and to pay compensation. The Ministry of Petroleum and Gas is also making great efforts to protect the environment by planting forests around oilfields, exploiting associated petroleum gas and setting up hazardous waste treatment units.

90. A national committee has been established to make proposals on the treatment of hazardous materials and waste, and their impact on the climate.

L. The conflict in Darfur

Recommendations 83.53, 83.54, 83.55, 83.56, 83.57, 83.58, 83.59, 83.60 and 83.61

91. Efforts to build lasting peace in Darfur are continuing on the part of the national Government, the Darfur Regional Authority and partners in the United Nations and the African Union. There are also ongoing efforts to implement the Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement for the Adoption of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. During the period covered by the present report many armed combatants have joined the peace process, while the Office of the Public Prosecutor at the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur has been given extra legal staff and provided with technical and logistical assistance.

92. Following an international forum on development held in Darfur in August 2012, a reconstruction and development fund for Darfur was established which finances return and resettlement projects and funds development. The fund also oversees the implementation of development projects and ensures that the needs of women, children and orphans are met. A voluntary repatriation and resettlement commission has also been set up and, in March 2013, it organized a conference to study the situation of displaced persons and refugees. Working with partners, the commission has managed to create 291 voluntary return villages which accommodate 650,000 returning families. The Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission, which works with other interested parties to provide support for persons affected by conflict, has signed a joint action plan with funding of US$ 1.03 billion for 349 projects in 11 different sectors. The Commission has also concluded cooperation agreements with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration to carry out humanitarian activities in Darfur and other areas affected by conflict, with a budget of US$ 13,323,900.

M. Cooperation with human rights mechanisms

Recommendations 83.72, 83.73, 83.74 and 83.75

93. In accordance with the provisions of the status-of-forces agreement, the Government of the Sudan cooperates with the mission of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in such areas as the issue of visas and travel permits, the import of equipment and the protection of the mission and its headquarters. Out of concern for the welfare of the members of the mission the Government has, on a very limited number of occasions and for genuine security reasons, advised them not to travel to certain specific regions of Darfur. However, UNAMID is not obliged to abide by the Government's advice and has lodged complaints about restrictions on its movement.

94. The judiciary and law enforcement agencies, particularly the Public Prosecutor at the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur, cooperate in investigating crimes and in ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice. However, the UNAMID mission rarely cooperates with these bodies when UNAMID personnel are asked to appear as witnesses or complainants to make statements before the Prosecutor or the courts.

95. Three Independent Experts on the situation of human rights in the Sudan have succeeded one another during the period covered by the report. Each of them met with full cooperation on the part of the Government of the Sudan and stated as much in their reports.

N. Violence against women

Recommendations 83.60, 83.61, 83.62 and 83.103

96. As part of its efforts to combat violence against women and children, the authorities have taken a number of measures in terms of legislation and strategic policies. They include the following.

97. The Criminal Code as amended in 2015 stipulates penalties for offences that fall within the concept of violence against women such as sexual harassment. It also differentiates between adultery and rape.

98. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act 2014 stipulates harsher penalties for trafficking when the victims are women or children.

99. A draft national policy to combat violence against women and children has been drawn up for the period 2016-2031.

100. The five-year national plan to combat violence against women 2012-2016 has been adopted. The unit for combating violence against women and children follows up on the implementation of the plan by acting as a coordination mechanism between ministries, the provinces, civil society organizations and United Nations organizations.

101. The unit for combating violence against women and children has created 14 subunits at the provincial level, including 4 four subunits in four of the provinces of Darfur. A network of civil society organizations engaged in combating violence against women has also been set up in order to improve coordination between the State sector and civil society, and it focuses particular attention on the issue of violence against women in Darfur. A number of action plans for the provinces of Darfur have emerged from the national plan to combat violence against women, and these have been discussed with the European Union in Brussels.

102. The unit has worked with the Ministry of the Interior to increase the number of female police officers involved in protecting civilians in camps, especially women. A

course has been developed to train female police officers in investigation techniques and in the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights.

103. Training and capacity-building courses focusing on international, regional and national law have been run for persons working in the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. Female police officers have received training in how to conduct criminal investigations in cases involving violence against women, and a guide on medical treatment in cases of rape has been developed.

104. The report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the prevention of violence against women and girls (E/CN/6/2013/4) mentioned the Sudan as one of 10 States to have reported on the establishment of coordination mechanisms, including task forces, dedicated units, working and interministerial groups and observatories.

O. Female genital mutilation and early marriage

Recommendations 83.105, 83.106, 83.107, 83.108 and 83.109

105. Work began on a draft law to prevent female genital mutilation in 2007. The draft was reviewed by a national committee for the review of laws related to women's rights in 2012-2013, and a series of consultative meetings between the Ministry of Justice and parliamentarians took place.

106. In cooperation with UNICEF the Government has launched the "Salima" campaign which is a social media initiative designed to prevent female genital mutilation. It focuses on bringing about change in society rather than in the individual, making change socially acceptable and disseminating knowledge and awareness about the harmful effects of female genital mutilation.

107. The National Council for Child Welfare, in cooperation with the National Council for Strategic Planning, drafted the national strategy 2008-2018 to prevent female genital mutilation in the Sudan. The aim of the strategy is to build capacity in institutions and in civil society, and to develop skills in society as a whole in order to help people to abandon this practice. Goals of the strategy include enacting legislation to prohibit and criminalize female genital mutilation, raising awareness in society, constructing local, regional and international partnerships, and mobilizing religious figures to play their part. The implementation of the strategy is proceeding as planned.

108. In 2015, the State introduced a national strategy to end child marriage. Sixteen days of activities were organized in November 2015 to stop violence against women and child marriage and to encourage the education of girls. In the same year agreement was reached with the European Union on three projects within the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights. The projects seek to eradicate harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and circumcision, to establish the rights of women in civil status legislation, and to provide psychological, social and legal support for female victims of human rights violations.

P. The reform of the Criminal Code

Recommendation 83.110

109. The Ministry of Justice issued Decree No. 74 of 2015, pursuant to Council of Ministers Decree No. 140 of 2015 (national reform programme), establishing a committee to review a number of pieces of legislation, first among them the 1991 Criminal Code, in the light of the Constitution, of treaties ratified by the Sudan and of the experience of

similar countries. The committee, which is made up of former judges, human rights specialists and academics, can call on the services of whomsoever it wishes including activists.

110. It should be recalled that the Criminal Code underwent a partial amendment in 2015 on sexual harassment, rape and abuse of authority (see para. 11 above).

Q. The administration of justice

Recommendations 83.116, 83.117, 83.118, 83.120 and 83.121

111. The State takes great pains to train persons who work in the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, to which end the Judicial and Legal Sciences Institute was established under Presidential Decree No. 489 of 2014. The prerogatives and professional competencies of the Institute were subsequently expanded under Decree No. 35 of 2015. During those two years the Institute organized many training courses in a number of different fields including investigation, criminal justice, juvenile justice, governance and anti-money laundering techniques. The courses were attended by 369 judges, 137 public prosecutors and counsellors of the Ministry of Justice, 78 lawyers, 91 police officers, 55 researchers and 32 persons from other sectors including civil society organizations. The Institute, in cooperation with the UNAMID mission, has also organized training workshops for 98 judges of the local courts in Darfur as part of an attempt to mediate a solution to the conflict.

112. A coordinating council for human rights has been set up, chaired by the police, to disseminate a human rights culture and build capacity among police officers. Its purpose is to improve their knowledge of international human rights standards in order for them to then exercise and apply those standards in the course of their work.

113. The Ministry of Defence is training the armed forces in international humanitarian law. During the period 2011-2015, more than 20 training courses were held in which 913 officers and enlisted men learned about such subjects as the protection of children during armed conflicts and the laws of armed conflict.

114. In order to ensure the effectiveness of guarantees of a fair trial, as consecrated in international and regional human rights treaties, and to disseminate a human rights culture among the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, the Advisory Council for Human Rights and UNDP organized a number of workshops during the period 2013-2014. Participants included judges, public prosecutors, lawyers and police and security officers with 50 people taking part from each of eight of the provinces of the Sudan.

R. The role of the Special Prosecutor for Darfur

Recommendations 83.118, 83.123, 83.124, 83.125, 83.126, 83.127, 83.128, 83.129 and 83.130

115. The Office of the Public Prosecutor at the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur was expanded in the period 2014-2015 with the establishment of sub-offices in the five provinces of Darfur. The complement of public prosecutors has also been increased and they now number 100, 12 of whom work in the central office.

116. A number of criminal cases have been referred to the Special Criminal Court and judgements have been issued while other cases are still under investigation.[18] The Ministry of Justice has formed three investigative committees on the armed clashes between tribes in Darfur. As a result of the work of those committees a number of criminal cases have been launched and that has helped to calm the situation in those areas.

117. Statistics for 2015 from the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur show that a total of 76 criminal cases are under investigation: 63 in Northern Darfur, 7 in Southern Darfur, 4 in Eastern Darfur and 2 in Western Darfur. The charges involved include murder, crimes against humanity, armed robbery, criminal conspiracy, etc. The cases are proceeding, some having been sent for trial and some still being investigated.

S. Freedom of expression

Recommendation 83.132

118. There have recently been significant improvements in freedom of expression. In order to create a climate conducive to comprehensive national dialogue, the President of the Republic has issued a number of decrees to promote such freedom and encourage the publication of newspapers. Newspapers are no longer censored and there are currently more than 55 dailies in the Sudan of which 26 are political dailies. On 6 December 2015, the Chief Justice issued judicial circular No. 7 of 2015 underlining the urgent need to examine the issue of public freedoms and the measures taken by the authorities concerning press freedom and the banning or restriction of the activities of political parties and civil society organizations. The circular makes it clear that these issues must be given absolute priority over all other matters.

119. The Constitutional Court has issued a number of rulings in support of press freedom including its March 2014 decision to strike down as unconstitutional the decree ordering the closure of the political daily *Al-Tayyar*. Also, in September 2013, it issued a ruling admitting a constitutional case brought by a journalist on the *Al-Intibaha* newspaper. The Court struck down a decree which had banned a number of articles the journalist had written and ordered their publication.

T. The right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

Recommendation 83.132

120. Under the five-year plan 2012-2016, the State aligns itself with the poor and the vulnerable, and the sums allocated for their support were entirely used for that purpose in the years 2014 and 2015. The budget for 2016 focuses on pensions and on basic services to citizens. During the years prior to 2015, health insurance coverage fully funded by the State was extended to 790,000 families while, at the same time, 420,000 poor families were covered by the Zakat Office. A further 200,000 families are added to health insurance by the State each year, meaning that a total of 1.19 million families are covered in the 2016 budget.[19]

121. The State is taking steps to reduce poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It established the Supreme Council to Combat Poverty and has devised a quarter-century strategic development plan which aims to increase spending on the poor.

[18] See Annex 21.
[19] See Annex.

For example, 12 per cent of financial ceilings have been allocated to finance microprojects as a way of achieving an equitable distribution of income. Microfinance grew enormously in the period 2011-2014 in terms of the amount of funding granted, the number of beneficiaries and the spread of microfinance institutions throughout the provinces. There were 30 such institutions in 2014, as compared with just 13 in 2013.[20] Furthermore, a series of social funds have been established, such as the social integration fund, the student support fund and the graduates employment programme, as well as subsidies to fund irrigation and rain-fed agricultural projects. The Zakat Office also provides support for poor people (see annex No.).

122. The State has developed a five-year strategic health plan 2012-2016 defining priorities, foremost among them comprehensive health-care coverage.

123. A health partnership agreement between the Government of the Sudan, international development partners and representatives of civil society organizations was signed in July 2014. Also in 2014, approval was given for a concept paper of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, while the health-care system was bolstered with a budget of US$ 132,240,879.

124. For information about efforts to combat endemic diseases, see paragraphs 19-21 of the present report.

125. In order to improve health-care access, particularly in remote areas, the State has adopted a self-funding project to expand primary health facilities. Under the project, a number of health units have been established and furnished with medical equipment and staff (see paragraph 21 of the present report).

126. The State has adopted a national plan to improve access to potable water and sanitation in order to achieve one of the Millennium Development Goals. The plan aims to increase individual consumption rates by the end of 2019 to 25 litres per day in rural areas and 90 litres per day in urban areas (see paragraph 24 of the present report and annex 7).

127. Survey indicators show that mortality rates of children under 5 declined in the period 2010-2014 from 83 to 68 per 1,000 live births (2014 multiple indicator cluster survey) while infant mortality rates dropped from 60 to 48 per 1,000 live births over the same period. These are the results of the State's efforts to improve health care for mothers and children, and of the vaccination programme in which coverage of the three-dose pentavalent vaccine has increased to 95 per cent.

U. The right to education and cultural life

Recommendations 83.148, 83.149, 83.150, 83.151, 83.152, 83.153, 83.154, 83.155 and 83.156

128. Measures have been taken to improve opportunities for accessing education, especially in isolated rural areas. The Ministry of Education is working to encourage innovative educational solutions for persons in inaccessible areas, persons affected by poverty and displaced persons. It has put strategic plans in place which seek to ensure equality of opportunity for children and young persons who are not in school. To this end it adopted a number of projects in the years 2014 and 2015, including the following:

[20] Annex: table of microfinance indicators.

2014 projects

(a) A project for children and young persons who are not in school was launched in 2005 and aims to educate young people between the ages of 7 and 24;

(b) The Educate a Child project began in 2013 and will run until 2016; it is aimed at children between the ages of 6 and 13;

(c) An electronic learning project aimed at isolated communities began in 2010.

2015 projects

(a) A comprehensive national anti-illiteracy campaign began in 2015 and will run until 2017; its aim is to make 2 million people literate by the beginning of 2017;

(b) The "Educated World for Sustainable Development" project began in 2015 and will run until 2018; it aims to build capacity among persons working in the field of literacy and adult education, and to establish integrated community centres in three provinces.

129. Enrolment rates in primary school improved tangibly for both sexes in the period 2011-2015, reaching 70.9 per cent. The country has also made great advances in secondary education and the number of State-run secondary schools currently stands at 3,373 thus helping to reduce wastage following basic education. Secondary school enrolment rates are currently 37.3 per cent while the number of primary schools stands at 17,737.

130. In the light of the recommendations which emerged from the 2012 National Education Congress, the National Centre for Curricula and Educational Research is working to introduce human rights principles into programmes of study and to introduce civic education into the secondary school syllabus. Those principles are: equality and non-discrimination, social justice, human dignity and the right to life, honouring women, protecting the good name and reputation of others, understanding, tolerance and the right to participate in public life. Moreover, radio broadcasts have been devised for parents and pupils to increase their awareness of their rights, protect them from exploitation and disseminate peace and tolerance.

131. The National Literacy and Adult Education Council is implementing an alternative learning programme (ALP) for children and young people who are not in school, who have never been to school, who have dropped out of school or who cannot be enrolled into the State education system without making up for the time they have lost.

132. A literacy and adult education action plan was put in place for the period 2010-2015, its principal aims being to reduce rates of basic illiteracy as well as cultural, technical and health illiteracy, and to make 2 million currently illiterate persons literate thereby enabling them to continue their education. The national anti-illiteracy campaign began in 2015 under the patronage of the President of the Republic and aims to make 9,697,795 people literate by 2020.

133. A study was carried out in 2014 aimed at reducing the number of children not enrolled in school, particularly in rural areas and especially children affected by war and displacement, poor families and girls. The study made a number of recommendations which the Government has undertaken to implement such as: strengthening the capacity of educational institutions, developing information systems, building new schools, increasing the wages of teachers and involving local communities in school activities. Thanks to such efforts school dropout rates have fallen to 1.9 per cent.

134. The State has made considerable efforts in cost reduction and in achieving universal free education by providing textbooks, classroom furniture and trained teachers. Nonetheless, internal and external challenges remain real obstacles to progress. These

include wars, internal conflicts, the imposition of the embargo and coercive measures, and the debts which afflict the people of the Sudan and affect human rights in the country, including the right to education.

V. Refugees and internally displaced persons

Recommendations 83.157, 83.158, 83.159 and 83.160

135. The Sudan has adopted a resettlement strategy for displaced persons either in newly-built villages or in building schemes within existing camps. The aim is to provide better living conditions and to improve opportunities for those people to exercise their human right to adequate housing. In this regard, it is important to take account of the financial constraints the Sudan faces as one of the least developed countries, and the impact of the unilateral coercive measures and sanctions which have been imposed on the nation. In order to address all the challenges associated with displacement, the Humanitarian Aid Commission has also developed a national policy for internally displaced persons. A key priority for the Government is to encourage voluntary repatriation, to which end it has built voluntary return villages. As a first step, 85 such villages have been constructed in the five provinces of Darfur. Another important priority is to meet fundamental needs and provide basic services such as security, health care, clean water and education, all of which are seen as vital if internally displaced persons are to be encouraged to settle, resume their activities in agriculture and animal husbandry, and contribute positively to development in their respective regions. Government has been pursuing a successful policy at the federal and local level involving seasonal return to areas of origin. The aim of the policy is to encourage agricultural activities during the rainy season.

136. Despite its serious economic and social difficulties, the Sudan hosts some of the largest numbers of refugees in the world. Refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2015 were estimated to stand at 635,631. Thanks to help from international organizations, 22 per cent of them have been registered in camps or in urban areas. However, the remaining 78 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers are in other urban areas and cities where they are reliant on the public services which the State provides for its own citizens. They have begun to be registered in a programme run by the civil registry authorities which is being implemented in a number of the country's provinces. In full compliance with the bilateral agreements signed between the Sudan and South Sudan, the Sudanese Government has declared that persons from South Sudan are welcome on national territory. An agreement has been signed between the Government of the Sudan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to register and count the numbers of persons arriving from South Sudan. This began with the registration of nearly 190,000 persons in the province of Khartoum while committees are at work in White Nile province to register persons arriving there.

V. Challenges and difficulties

A. Unilateral coercive measures

137. The efforts being made by the Sudan in the field of human rights are being hindered by a number of challenges which the country is striving to overcome, chief among them the unilateral coercive measures which have been in force since 1997. Those measures are at odds with the letter and the spirit of human rights treaties and they have negatively affected Sudanese citizens in the exercise of their rights and the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living. Despite the attempts made over many years by the Government of the Sudan to

overcome the negative effects of the sanctions, and to seek alternatives by approaching industrialized countries to cover the essential needs of citizens, the sanctions have remained in effect and have, by any measure, had a destructive effect on the exercise of basic human rights in such areas as health care, water, education, food, transport, development and other fundamental rights.[21] The Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights visited the Sudan in November 2015 to see the effects of those measures. A detailed report was prepared for the Special Rapporteur who will present his own findings at the thirty-third regular session of the Human Rights Council.

B. Foreign debt

138. Foreign debt has contributed to a drop in funding for vitally important development projects. That in turn has increased the cost of living and the poverty rate while at the same time limiting opportunities to operate on global currency markets and reducing the inflow of foreign currency with respect to demand. All of this has caused the national currency to lose value. The crisis has been exacerbated by the failure on the part of the international community to live up to promises made during the Naivasha Process in 2005 to relieve the Sudan of its debt if a comprehensive peace agreement was reached. Unlike almost all other States and despite the fact that it fulfils the necessary conditions, the Sudan has been unable to benefit from debt relief initiatives or from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC).

C. The armed conflicts in some areas of the Sudan

139. The conflicts began as tribal disputes over grazing lands and natural resources after drought struck a number of areas. That was compounded by the war in the south, the influx of arms from neighbouring countries and the fact that a number of foreign powers were supporting the armed fighters.

140. As a result of the conflicts, thousands of people fled their areas and, despite all its efforts, the State has been unable to help them. The Government has been endeavouring to stop the armed conflict in a number of ways such as negotiations between the two regions under the auspices of the African Union, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur which led to a number of peace agreements and the comprehensive national dialogue in which more than 20 armed movements have participated. Peace is the main topic of the dialogue which is expected to lead to a complete cessation of armed hostilities in the country.

D. Key priorities and initiatives to be carried out in the near future

141. The Republic of the Sudan is striving to:

(a) Develop a comprehensive human rights strategy;

(b) Approve a permanent Constitution.

[21] See annex 21.

E. Expectations regarding capacity-building and technical assistance

142. The Government of the Sudan expresses it thanks and appreciation to all those partners who have given technical assistance of any kind which has helped the country to meet its human rights obligations.

143. The Republic of the Sudan hopes to receive further technical aid and support in order to help coordinate efforts to protect and promote human rights in the country.

F. Voluntary pledges

144. The Republic of the Sudan will continue tirelessly to cooperate and communicate with all partners and stakeholders at the national, regional and international level in order to fulfil its human rights obligations.

VI. Concluding observations

145. Sudan is determined to continue its progress, to add to its record in the field of promoting and protecting human rights, and to draw positively from global best practices in that regard. The report makes it clear that there is an effective political will to give human rights issues their due importance and this is reflected in specific programmes and directives. The Government attaches great weight to the universal periodic review process and is eager to address all recommendations which may help to improve conditions for people in the Sudan. In the same way, it is keen to benefit from the discussion of its first and second reports before the Human Rights Council in order to identify best practices in the area of human rights and to build national capacity in that regard. Sudan looks forward to cooperating with all its partners at home and abroad with complete openness and transparency, and to promoting and protecting human rights in accordance with the law.